

Chapter 7: Mitigation Donation Annual Report

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INTRODUCTION

This information is specific to two mitigation projects: Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW), located in Lee and Collier counties, and Pennsuco, in Miami-Dade County, for FY2005 (October 1, 2004 through September 30, 2005). In accordance with Chapter 373.414(1)(b)(2), Florida Statutes (F.S.), this report provides a description of the two endorsed mitigation projects, including the available mitigation fund balance, expenditures during this time frame, and where applicable, success criteria, monitoring, and long-term management. The two mitigation sites no longer accept mitigation funds but continue as expenditure sites; therefore, there is only a land stewardship component to this report and not a regulatory component.

CORKSCREW REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM WATERSHED

Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) is a vast project covering approximately 60,000 acres in Lee and Collier counties (**Figure 7-1**). The CREW lands contain some of the largest remaining pristine cypress wetlands in the United States, providing habitat to a number of rare, threatened, and endangered species. In June 1995, the District began accepting cash payments in CREW as a form of mitigation to offset impacts to wetlands. Mitigation funding provides land acquisition, chemical treatment of exotics, hydrologic enhancement and management through security monitoring, and prescribed burning.

The associated environmental benefit of land acquisition in CREW contributes to corridor building and improved wildlife habitat for threatened and endangered species. Additional benefits for the conservation and protection of water resources in CREW include improved water quality, water management, and flood protection.

Acquisition

The Summary of Wetlands Mitigation Balances by Project (also referred to as the financial summary report), dated September 30, 2005, prepared by the District's Accounting and Financial Services Division, indicates a balance of \$803,102.29 available in the CREW land acquisition fund. During FY2005, three tracts totaling 15 acres were acquired through mitigation funding for a cost of \$59,250. Additional expenditures for these and future acquisitions included recording costs, title fees, appraisal, relocation assistance, and staff support, further debiting this account by \$60,812 for a total acquisition expenditure in 2005 of \$120,062. **Table 7-1** provides a summary of the mitigation lands acquired to date within the CREW boundary. For FY2006, \$330,000 is budgeted for land acquisition and \$30,000 for associated costs. The District Real Estate staff expects to fully expend this amount.

Restoration

The financial summary report indicates an available balance of \$754,231.90 on September 30, 2005 in the restoration fund. During this reporting period, the District expended \$260,463.46 for contractual services in the initial and follow-up treatment of exotic species such as melaleuca, Brazilian pepper, cogon grass, downy rose myrtle, *Lygodium*, bahia, and creeping signal grass on 6,998 acres in CREW. Of this, 51 percent or \$132,449.42 was funded with mitigation funding, which accounted for the treatment of 3,559 acres. In addition to exotic control costs, other restoration expenditures included staff support of contractors for \$10,711.50 and \$8,500 for contractual services to support monitoring of restoration projects. The total restoration expenditures were \$151,660.92. For FY2006, \$150,000 is budgeted for exotic removal, \$50,000 for a ground cover restoration study, and \$8,500 for continued monitoring of restoration projects.

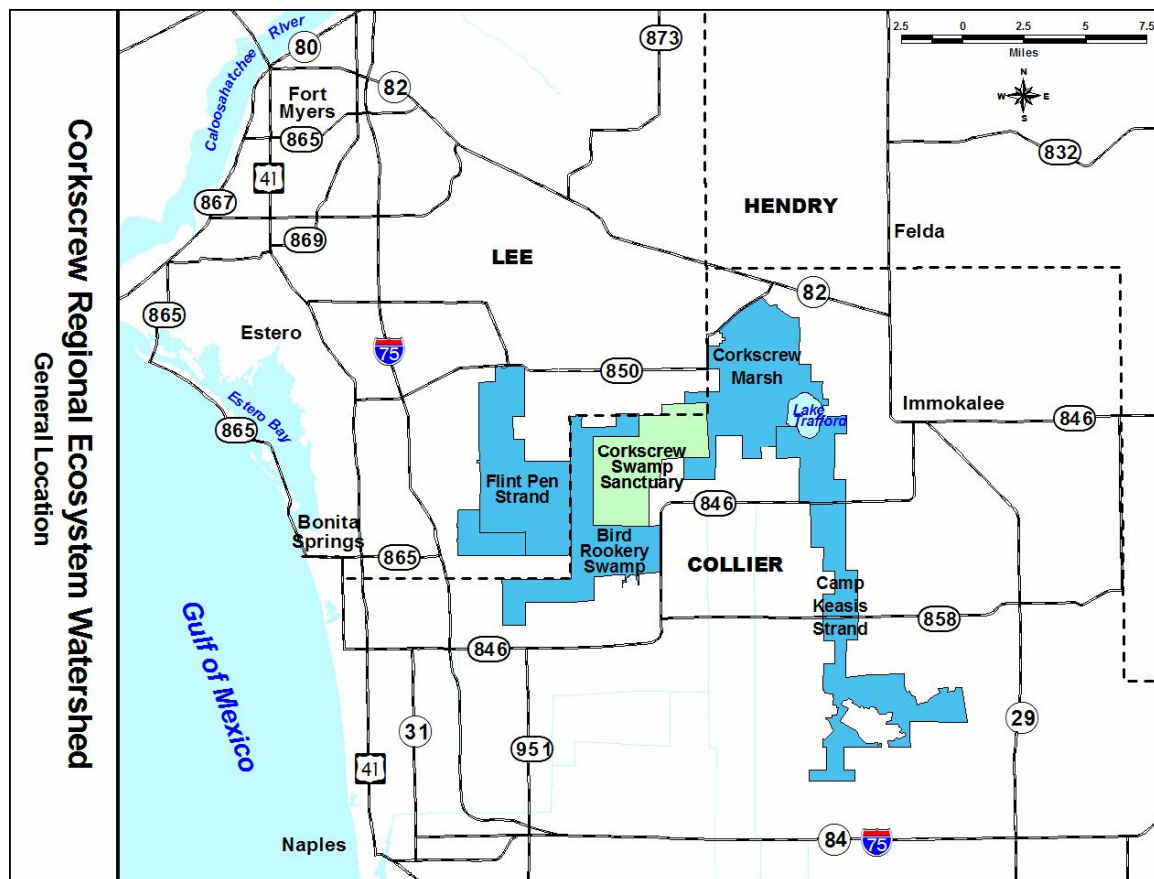


Figure 7-1. Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed.

Table 7-1. CREW acquisition parcels using mitigation funding as of September 30, 2005.

Tract	Acreage	Cost	Location
001-002	237.4	\$200,840.40	R27,T45,S13
003-488	40.0	\$61,000	R26,T47,S24
003-765	5.0	\$20,000	S35
003-757	5.0	\$20,000	"
003-776	5.0	\$20,000	"
003-761	5.0	\$20,000	"
003-766	5.0	\$20,000	"
003-758	5.0	\$20,000	"
003-772	5.0	\$20,000	"
003-804	25.0	\$45,000	S21
003-805	2.5	\$4,500	"
003-806	5.0	\$9,000	"
003-807	2.5	\$4,500	"
003-808	2.5	\$4,500	"
003-809	2.5	\$4,500	"
003-815	185	\$333,000	S22 &27
003-816	10	\$10,500	S22
003-826	30	\$54,000	S24
003-828	5.0	\$9,000	"
003-829	65.76	\$117,000	"
003-833	2.5	\$4,500	S21
003-760	5.0	\$130,000	S35
003-755	10.0	\$45,000	"
001-038	283.49	\$992,983.99	R27, T46, S35
100-005	20.00	\$250,000	R26, T47 S31
003-234	5.0	\$17,000	S27
003-245	5.0	\$12,500	"
003-256	5.0	\$23,000	"
003-277	5.0	\$23,000	"
003-278	5.0	\$23,000	"
003-302	5.0	\$17,000	"
003-304	5.0	\$23,000	"
003-307	5.0	\$23,000	"
003-308	5.0	\$23,000	"
003-325	10.0	\$25,000	S28
003-358	10.0	\$25,000	S28
003-302	5.0	\$17,000	S27
003-226	5.0	\$23,000	S27
003-896	5.0	\$17,500	S22
003-957	5.0	\$18,750	S28
Total	1054.15	\$2,730,574.39	

During this reporting period, the \$8,500 expended on monitoring of the four restoration sites documented vegetative change in response to hydrologic improvements, ground cover restoration, exotic plant control, and re-vegetation activities. Restoration success is measured by the reduction of exotic species and recruitment of target native species along each of the six transects at four sites (**Figure 7-2**). The four sites are in various stages of site preparation, exotic removal and treatment, re-vegetation, and hydrologic restoration occurring over a period of four years. Other factors that were monitored include water level and/or soil saturation, observed aquatic macro fauna, wildlife utilization, and/or indicators of wildlife (i.e. tracks, scat) at equally spaced locations along each transect. During this reporting period, the District's contractor, KCI Technologies Inc., submitted its third (December 2004) and fourth (June 2005) semiannual monitoring reports. The last monitoring report indicated continued improvement in vegetative composition. Native Florida grasses continue to increase and several desirable native plant species have shown up for the first time in this report.

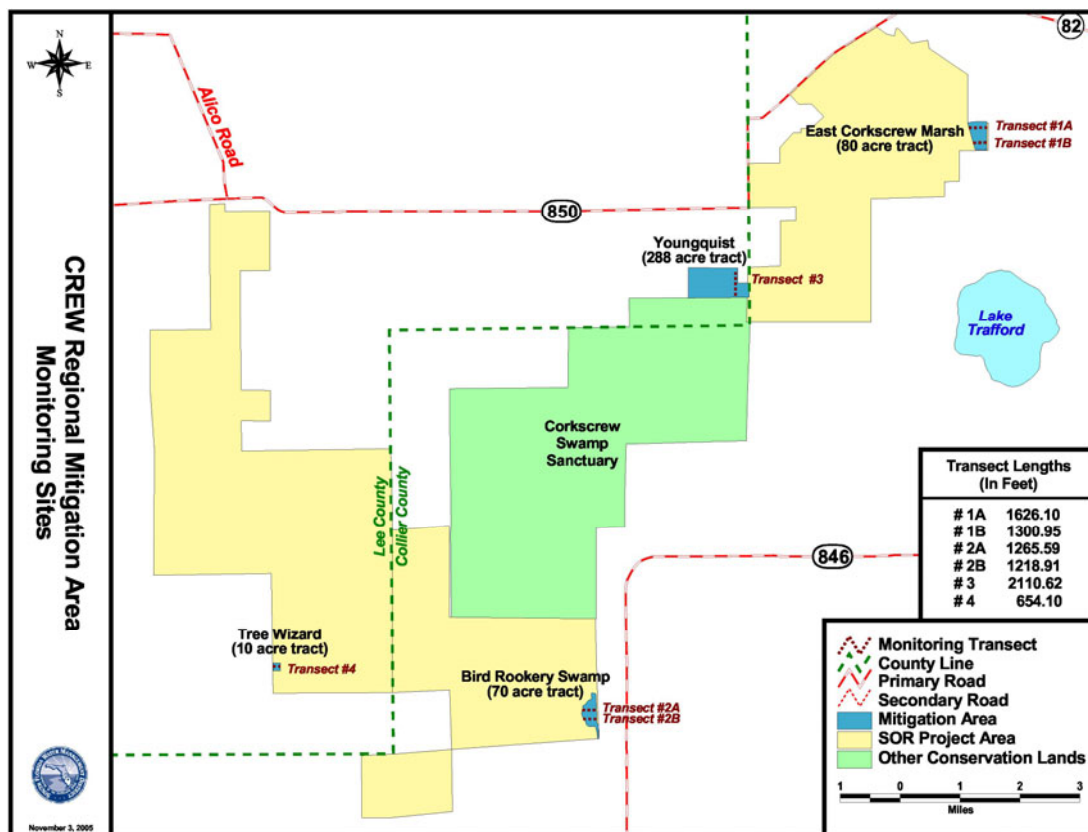


Figure 7-2. CREW Regional Mitigation Area monitoring sites.

Management

The financial summary report indicates a balance of \$37,320.42 available as interest from the corpus amount. In addition, the interest on the land acquisition and restoration is \$335,596.04 as of September 30, 2005. This funding can be used either towards land acquisition, restoration, or long-term management. During this reporting period, no funds were expended on long-term management activities, and there are no plans to expend or budget management funds until the project enters a restored condition or long-term management phase. The financial summary report indicates a total amount of interest available of \$372,916.46.

PENNSUCO

The Pennsuco Regional Mitigation Area in Miami-Dade County is part of the Pennsuco Wetlands or Cell 26 (**Figure 7-3**), of the East Coast Buffer (ECB). Pennsuco Wetlands/Cell 26 covers an area of approximately 13,000 acres in Miami-Dade County. Pennsuco is located between the Dade-Broward Levee and U.S. 27 (east/west), and extends south to the Tamiami Trail (U.S. 41).

In 1995, the SFWMD began utilizing Pennsuco as a regional offsite mitigation area, allowing permit applicants to make mitigation contributions for the acquisition, enhancement, and long-term management of Pennsuco lands as compensation for permitted wetland impacts. The environmental benefit will provide protection, enhancement and management of the floral, faunal, and hydrologic resources of Pennsuco parcels. Pennsuco emphasizes the enhancement of a degraded ecosystem that likely will continue to degrade and further impact adjacent natural areas unless actions are taken to reduce the spread of exotics. The enhancement of Pennsuco has the potential to yield regional ecological benefits and contribute to the goals of the Everglades restoration.

Acquisition

During FY2005, mitigation funds were used to acquire two tracts totaling 180 acres. Costs included \$2,700,000 for land and \$24,419.89 in associated costs, or a total of \$2,724,419.89. This acquisition was funded using all of the acquisition account of \$92,606.86 and the acquisition and restoration interest account of \$2,447,146.67. In order to fully support the acquisition, the balance of the acquisition, or \$184,666.40, was funded from the restoration account. Due to efficiencies in conducting restoration activities over the past seven years, there is a surplus of funding available in the restoration account with more funding collected than required for the treatment of exotics in Pennsuco. When the SFWMD Governing Board approved the acquisition of the two tracts, there was a concurrent approval to use the restoration fund to make up the balance needed to complete the transactions. The financial summary report indicates that for period ending September 30, 2005, a balance of \$0 is available in the Pennsuco land acquisition fund and \$0 available in the acquisition and restoration interest account. **Table 7-2** summarizes acquisition to date in Pennsuco.

Restoration

The treatment program involves a multiyear herbicidal and manual removal program with a follow-up controlled burn. At the end of year five, it is expected that the melaleuca can be controlled by routine maintenance through use of the long-term management fund. Land managers conduct semiannual aerial and on-ground monitoring to evaluate exotic treatments and provide timely, adaptive follow-up treatment.

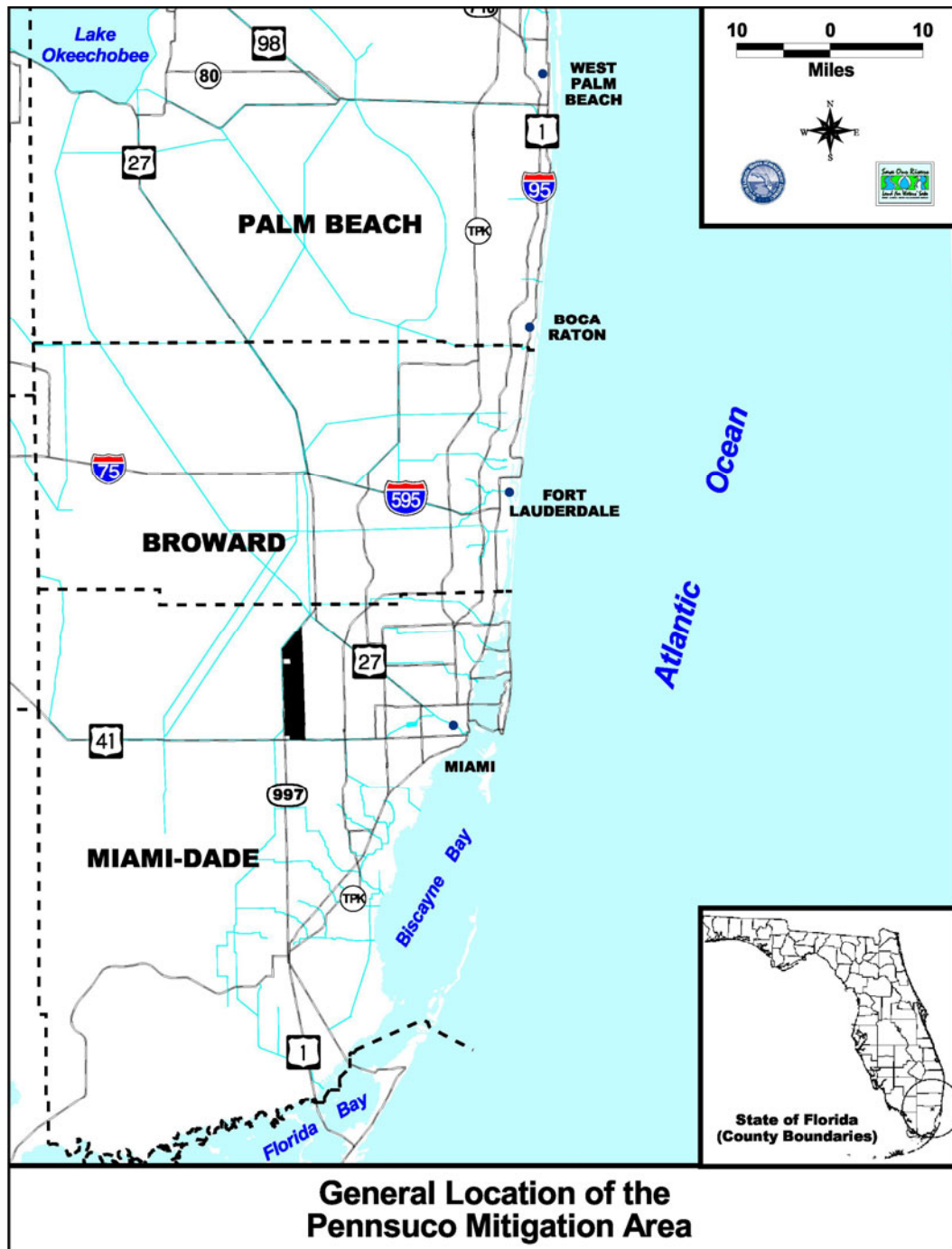


Figure 7-3. The Pennsuco Regional Mitigation Area.

Table 7-2. Pennsuco acquisition parcels using developer's mitigation funding (211) as of September 30, 2005.

Tract Number	Acreage Acquired with Mitigation Funds	Mitigation Funded	% of Tract
300-932	482.50	\$868,500	100%
300-912	160	\$400,000	50%
300-913	320	\$800,000	100%
301-916	160	\$400,000	50%
301-917	120	\$300,000	50%
300-962	160	\$400,000	50%
304-973	320	\$800,000	100%
304-940	5.0	\$15,000	100%
304-941	10.0	\$30,000	100%
304-952	10.0	\$30,000	100%
305-967	5.0	\$15,000	100%
306-920	10.0	\$30,000	100%
305-951	1.36	\$4,800	100%
306-926	2.5	\$8,750	100%
305-968	5.0	\$15,000	100%
305-915	1.44	\$5,100	100%
305-912	5.0	\$15,000	100%
305-956	.68	\$2,400	50%*
305-957	.68	\$2,400	50%*
305-927	2.045	\$7,150	50%*
300-919	40	\$100,000	50%*
303-965	5	\$15,000	50%*
**	407.2	\$2,011,750	**
300-964	120	\$1,800,000	100%
304-934	60	\$900,000	100%
Total	2,413.405	\$8,975,850	

* Lands acquired with 50% miner's mitigation funds and 50% developer's mitigation; acreage represented is amount acquired with fund 211 only.

** 56 parcels total, with federal share contributing 50% of the acquisition price on 40 of these parcels – indicated in italics. The balance of the tracts and other 50% of federally acquired tracts were acquired with P2000. Mitigation funds were used to swap out the P2000 acquired land with 50% coming from developer's (fund 211) and 50% from the Lake Belt miner's. The 56 parcels included: 300-914, 300-917, 300-920, 300-921, 300-925, 300-928, 300-929, 300-931, 300-959, 300-961, 300-963, 300-987, 300-988, 300-989, 300-990, 300-991, 300-992, 300-993, 300-994, 300-995, 300-996, 301-900, 301-903, 301-904, 301-906, 301-907, 301-908, 301-910, 301-913, 301-914, 301-915, 304-932, 304-971, 305-903, 305-921, 305-928, 306-929, 306-935, 306-943, 306-948, 306-966, 306-976, 306-977, 307-923, 307-924, 307-925, 307-926, 307-928, 307-929, 307-930, 307-934, 307-936, 307-938, 304-966, 304-968, and 304-974.

The financial summary report indicates a balance of \$6,815,434.11 available on September 30, 2005. During this reporting period, the District expended \$740,220.53 in the treatment of exotics. The work effort provided staff support and contractors in the completion of 5,444 acres of initial and follow-up aerial treatments. A summary of the tracts with exotic treatments to date and plans for FY2006 are provided in **Figure 7-4**. A visual depiction of the treatments over time is shown in **Figure 7-5**.

During this reporting period, KCI submitted its fifth (December 2004) and sixth (June 2005) semiannual monitoring reports, which evaluate the treatment efforts. The monitoring requires qualitative and quantitative assessments that document the success of the vegetative restoration, reduction of exotic species, and recruitment of target native species — sawgrass in particular. Water level and/or soil saturation, observed aquatic macro-fauna, wildlife utilization, and/or indicators of wildlife (i.e., tracks, scat) were also recorded. The latest monitoring report indicates that melaleuca has almost been eliminated, representing only 1 percent of the vegetation in 2005. The natural Everglades vegetation is showing strong recovery; sawgrass has increased 35 percent since 2004. Funding of \$8,060 to support this effort was debited from the restoration account for a total restoration expenditure of \$932,946.93 (including the \$184,666.40 for acquisition). For FY2006, \$1,000,000 is budgeted for exotic removal and \$8,060 for continued monitoring of restoration projects.

Management

According to the financial summary report, as of September 30, 2005 there was \$489,041.11 available as interest from the corpus amount. Utilization of monies from this fund will commence upon full restoration.

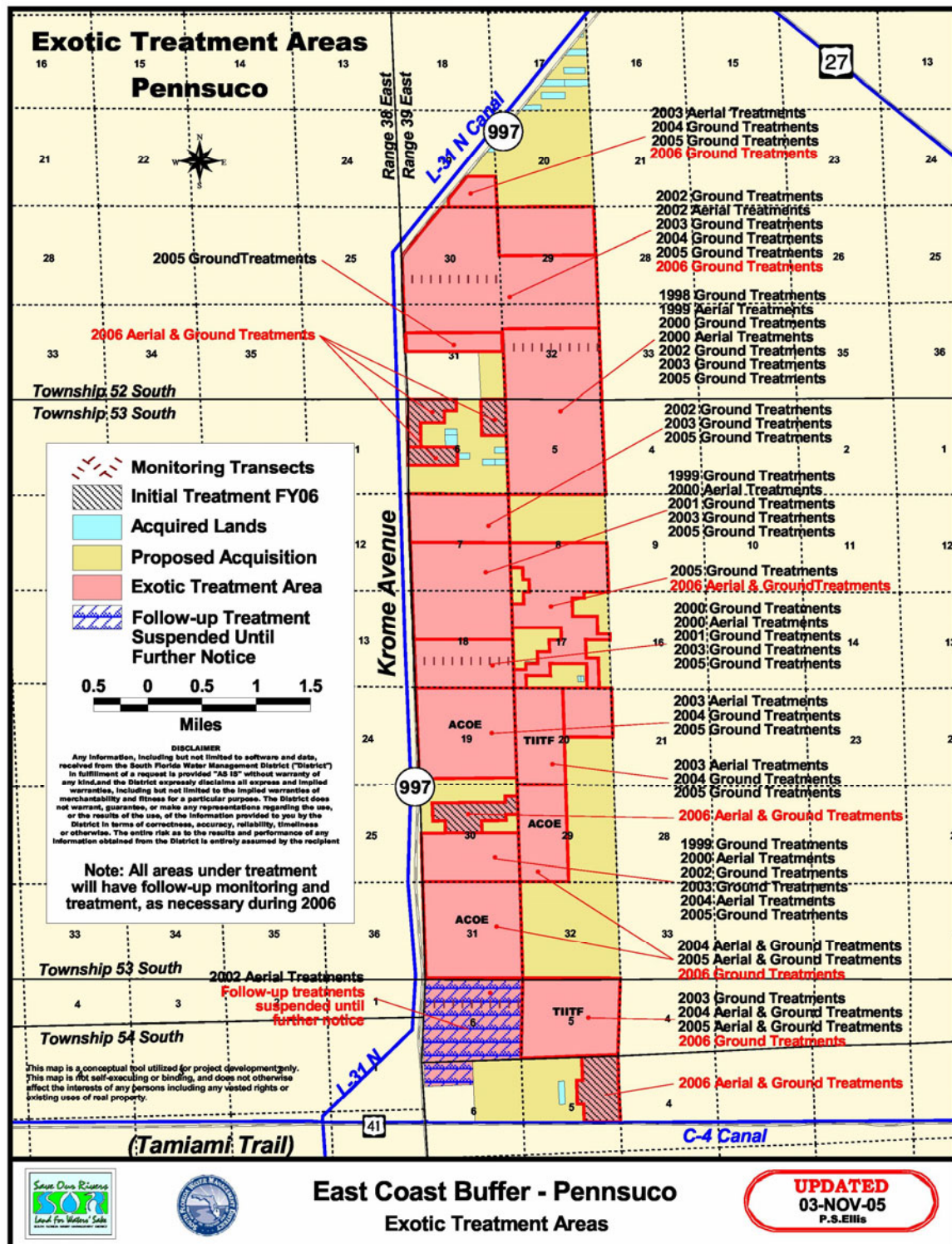


Figure 7-4. Pennsuco tracts with exotic treatments to date and plans for FY2006.

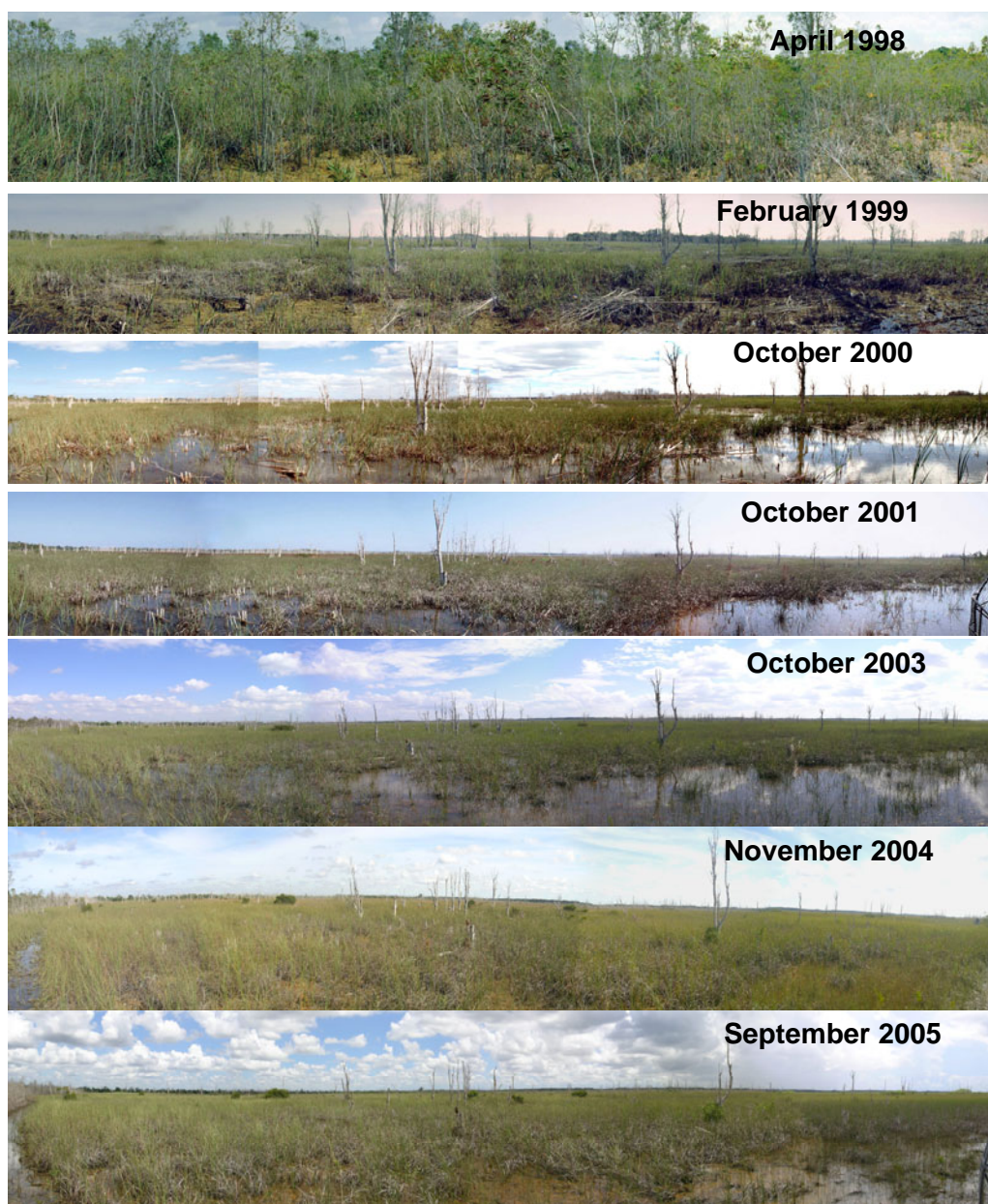


Figure 7-5. Visual depiction of exotic treatments in the Pennsuko Wetland Mitigation Area over time.

SUMMARY

The following financial summary, as of September 30, 2005 shows the balances available in acquisition, restoration, and management categories:

Project	Land Acquisition	Restoration	Long-term Maintenance	Total
CREW	\$803,102.29	\$754,231.90	\$372,916.46	\$1,930,250.65
Pennsuco	\$0	\$6,815,434.11	\$489,041.11	\$7,304,475.22

The following expenditure summary categorizes mitigation fund spending into components of acquisition, restoration, and management for period October 1, 2004–September 30, 2005.

Project	Land Acquisition	Restoration	Long-term Maintenance	Total
CREW	\$120,062.00	\$151,660.92	\$0	\$271,722.92
Pennsuco	\$2,539,753.53	\$932,946.93	\$0	\$3,472,700.46
Total	\$2,659,815.53	\$1,084,607.85	\$0	\$3,744,423.38

LITERATURE CITED

Mumby, F. 2005. Summary of Wetlands Mitigation Balances by Project. South Florida Water Management District, West Palm Beach, FL.